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SUBJECT: THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION IN CARABOBO STATE

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor, for Reason 1.4(d)  
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Summary  
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1. (C) Movimiento Quinta Republica's (MVR) Carabobo State coordinator Luis Medina told poloff the selection of MVR candidates by the people is a sign the Bolivarian Revolution has evolved and is becoming more democratic. By 2007 President Hugo Chavez's supporters would unite under the MVR party, he said, or become a "new opposition" that understood and supported the Revolution but not Chavez himself. Medina scorned Carabobo Governor Acosta and said his recent official entry into the MVR was a sign the retired General would learn to play by "the rules." Former Governor Henrique Salas Roemer also criticized the Governor citing alleged lack of popular support and disputes within the regional MVR leadership. Independant Mayor Francisco Cabrera disapproved of Acosta for his inability to control land invasions and disrespect for private property. Separately, a Bolivarian Circle member denied the Circles had political party affiliations, and defended the "unbiased" judicial system and Chavez's take on the FARC and "new socialism." End Summary.

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The Revolution Evolution: Next Steps  
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2. (C) Luis Felipe Medina, Movimiento Quinta Republica's (MVR) regional coordinator in Carabobo State told Poloff March 3 that Venezuela's revolution had evolved and it was now time for the "democratization" of the political party. He said the registration drive for the MVR that ended March 6 was the first step in increasing membership and participation. (Note: National Assembly President Nicolas Maduro told the media more than 1.5 million new members registered with the MVR by March 6.) The next step is to allow MVR members to vote for candidates for the local council and parochial elections slated for August 7, said Medina. He also predicted that supporters of President Hugo Chavez would win 90-95 percent of the local and parochial elections and about 70-75 percent of the National Assembly seats in the December elections.

3. (C) Medina predicted that after the presidential elections of 2006 Chavez's supporters would consolidate into one party, the MVR. Medina said the consolidation would help eliminate the "business of political parties" which led to corruption and a power struggle. Leaders of political parties supporting Chavez, like Patria Para Todos and Podemos, would voluntarily unite when Chavez asked, forfeiting their power to remain part of the Revolution, Medina said. Otherwise, Medina asserted, they could become the "new opposition" which the Revolution needed to survive and grow. Medina said any future opposition that emerged would understand "the Revolution," would formerly have supported Chavez, and would work to bring changes within "the new structure" rather than to destroy it altogether as the former opposition wanted to do. It would then be obvious that the Bolivarian Revolution was not about one man (Chavez) but about changing a system, he noted.

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Regional Tension: MVR criticizes Governor Acosta  
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4. (C) Medina spoke disparagingly of Carabobo Governor Luis Felipe Acosta Carlez. He cited Acosta's lack of understanding of "the process," his incompetence, and lack of will and inability to stop land invasions in Carabobo. Noting the tension between several MVR party leaders, including Medina and Acosta, poloff asked why then Acosta had registered officially as a member of the MVR party February 24. Guacara municipality Mayor Jose Flores said that accepting Acosta into the MVR meant Acosta had moved into the MVR house and would now have to follow the "house rules" or leave. Medina asserted that Acosta could become "opposition" if he decided to split with the MVR, continuing on his theme that any future opposition would come from within.

15. (U) Separately, the criticism of Acosta became public when Argenis Loreto, mayor of Carabobo's Libertador municipality, also told the press that the Governor was hostage to Colombians, Arabs, and Dominicans who acted as his advisors and encouraged him to act against the Revolution for economic (primarily construction) interests. Loreto, like Flores and Medina, asserted that upon joining the MVR as a military man, Acosta knew he would have to heed the party, respect the hierarchy, and take orders.

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Salas Roemer: Watch Acosta Sink  
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16. (C) Former Carabobo Governor and founder of Proyecto Venezuela Henrique Salas Roemer told Poloff March 3 that Governor Acosta lacked popular support because it is commonly known that he had stolen the election. Salas said internal disputes with the MVR party leadership, including personal problems with Francisco Ameliach, national coordinator for the MVR and former National Assembly President, hampered Acosta. Salas claimed MVR leaders had instigated the land invasions to gain Acosta's cooperation, force compromises, and force him to grant the MVR some positions of power.

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Rotten Politicians Are Nothing New in Venezuela  
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17. (C) Francisco Cabrera, the independent mayor of Carabobo's capital Valencia told poloff March 3 Chavez's supporters had been able to steal some of his votes, but not the election because of his popularity and reputation for getting the job done. He criticized Acosta for doing nothing to stop invasions of private or public land in Carabobo, noting there was little protection for private property. Cabrera claimed to receive very little cooperation or funding from Acosta. He was making no effort to procure such funding or support, he said, because friends and advisors alike had counseled him to maintain his distance and keep his hands clean. Cabrera said he responded to Acosta's accusation that the mayoralty did not donate land for construction of low-income housing by publishing a list of land Valencia had designated for public projects, housing, or volunteered to donate to the State.

18. (C) Cabrera called Chavez increasingly dictatorial and said the GOV acted with complete impunity. However, while his family and associates were increasingly nervous, he planned on working and "riding it out" just as he had every other government before in the past 25 years. The ride would be long, he said, because he could foresee no way out of Chavez in the near future. Opposition political parties were dead, Cabrera asserted, and were now fronts that sold their support for a price.

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Bolivarian Circles  
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19. (C) Juan Jose Rodriguez Aguilar, member of a Bolivarian Circle in rural Carabobo and member of the Boston Group Carabobo, claimed that members of the Bolivarian Circles have no direct party affiliations. They must "watch over" government and elected officials from every party, he told Poloff March 3. (Note: Medina said Rodriguez is a Tupamaro, an extreme and sometimes violent group that supports Chavez. Rodriguez admitted he was part of a group that seized a rural mayor's office in Carabobo State two or three years ago, but he was not convicted of any wrongdoing.) Rodriguez said his only option was to move forward with "the process." He defended the judicial system saying those formerly in power were not used to being held responsible for their actions and so were calling it unbalanced power. Rodriguez asserted that if political bias became apparent in the judicial system, then the people, including the Bolivarian Circles, would speak out.

110. (C) Rodriguez also defended Chavez's decision not to declare the FARC a terrorist organization, saying it preserved his ability to act as a mediator. Rodriguez told poloff that Chavez's "new socialism," which would combine the best of "old" capitalism and socialism, was not communism, but instead a new way to eliminate poverty. He touted the Boston Group as a neutral place for Chavez supporters and opposition to dialog and begin building confidence in one another.

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Comment

11. (C) Medina depicted the Bolivarian Revolution as a fragile but unstoppable "process," a peaceful revolution. While admitting it had faults like appointed candidates or undemocratic courts, he saw the problems as growing pains that would be resolved as the revolution matured. Medina's insistence on the need for a new opposition to grow from

Chavismo acknowledged the fissures in Chavez's political movement.

112. (C) The power struggles and inner-party backstabbing appear more evident in Carabobo than in Caracas where most politicians and players aligned with Chavez tout the party line. There are reports that Acosta and the regional MVR leadership will meet to work out some of their differences. Medina's scorn for Acosta and attitude of "play by our rules or get out" make it unlikely any real compromises will be reached unless Acosta is willing to make some concessions and acknowledge regional party leaders. The meeting could just be a definition of the MVR's "house rules" for the Governor. Brownfield